

Stephens Sees Progress in First Year as Principal

By ADAM SWIFT

During his first year as DHS principal, Andrew Stephens said he's proud of the progress he's made at the school but added that there is still room to grow.

"In some ways, everything has gone as expected this year. By and large, it has been a really productive year," Stephens said. "Being principal is different everyday. That's what I like about the job."

One of the big accomplishments during the school year has been the work done towards achieving accreditation through the New England



Andrew Stephens is finishing up his first year as principal at DHS.

Association of Schools and Colleges.

"We've made great progress this year. It was a big thing that needed to be done," Stephens said. "We've had to take a hard look at our internal procedures and our course offerings."

The work toward the accreditation has involved many people in the school, including teachers and administrators, and has helped provide a sharper focus on the programs offered to students.

"After a lot of conversations with a lot of people,

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Principal Focuses on Writing Skills

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we've made a lot of progress with curriculum development and mapping," Stephens said.

One area of the curriculum where Stephens said he and his staff have put a lot of effort is writing.

"We're creating expectations for student writing," Stephens said.

To meet those expectations, there is a focus on writing not just in the English classroom, but in all subject areas, Stephens said. In addition to stressing the importance of writing in history and science class, there's also an effort to get all the schools involved in creating a consistent writing program from grade to grade.

"We all teach writing," Stephens said. "We have to be consistent about how we teach and assess our kids."

Stephens comes to the high school after working as a middle school principal in Hull last year.

While Stephens said there is a big learning curve moving up from the middle to high school level, he noted that most of his experience teaching and in administration has been at the high school level. Before moving to the middle school in Hull, he spent three years as the assistant principal at the high school.

Stephens also worked as a teacher in Vermont and in Newton.

"I have a pretty varied experience working in different

states and buildings," he said.

He said there are some noticeable differences about working in Duxbury.

"The thing that is really impressive is the level of commitment this community has to education," Stephens said.

In other towns, he said, it can often be a struggle to get parents to show up and contribute to school events, while in Duxbury, groups like the Duxbury Education Foundation take the lead in providing support to the schools.

As an administrator, Stephens said he misses the closer contact with students he had as a teacher.

"Being an administrator, you have a bigger impact school-wide, but at the same time, I really liked teaching," he said. "It was really hard to leave the classroom."

Although he said it was hard to leave the classroom, Stephens said he tries to get into classes as often as he can.

"I like to have that relationship with the kids," Stephens said. "I think one of the areas I need to work on is increasing my visibility in the school."

One area where he will be able to increase his visibility next year is with the start of the new student advisory program. With the program, teachers and administrators at the high school will serve as advisors to a small group of students throughout their time in the school.